

Anastasia



H.L. Dowless

Cast of Characters

Delmont Hamilton

Bo Hump

Davin

Fat Suzy

grandPa

Jimbo

King Puck

Anastasia

Pap

Raven

Burman

Riverboatman #1

Riverboatman #2

Riverboatman #3

Local

A rolling hillside covered in thick oak, holly, and rhododendron dominates the landscape. Through this landscape a very wide and deep river meanders. The bank on either side forms a high, almost flat cliff face, reaching more than one hundred feet up. Flowing upstream on the right side, nestled away inside the rolling landscape and the vegetation, sits the elegant mountain town of Highland Haven, filled with classical marble architecture and grand glorious mansions with huge doric columns. On the left side is tucked away the quiet reserved town of Meadowshire. The architecture is very modest brick and timber framed. In both places the daily lifestyle is well entrenched, the people patriotic and proud, and the atmosphere is timeless.

*Act I
Scene I*

Meadowshire 1936

A small cabin with chickens, goats & pigs in back

Enter Delmont Hamilton & Fat Suzy

Delmont Hamilton: (*tossing freshly ground cornmeal to the chickens*) Well there Fat Suzy, lay us some more eggs lady. We need all we can get. Besides liquor, it's nearbout all we can fetch 'round here of value these days. We can fetch a fresh cured ham ever now and again, but besides eggs and liquor, that's about it for the Hamiltons of Porter's Corner here.

Fat Suzy: (*clucks, whines, scratches around, pecks grain, glares up toward Delmont*)

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah, you're about right, ole Suzy there. I feel the same way. We'll get by somehow, that I know. These times are rough, but Clan Hamilton has seen far worse days in its time. You know I pick and shuck corn seems like from dawn until dusk. If I'm not shucking corn and strippin' the grain from the cobs, I'm

grindin' it into meal for our big still over yonder in Shepard's Holler.

Fat Suzy: *(scratches, clucks, whines, pecks grain, tilts head, glares hard into Delmont's eyes)*

Delmont Hamilton: You know Suzy, I swear you're right again. We've been doin' pretty dumb good with the still, of late. Ha ha ha, them revenueurs comb the ridges all up and down, but they all overlook the holler rock yonder up on hangman's hill in Shepard's Holler. I suppose most of 'em are know-nothin' Yankees from way out of town somewhere. They wouldn't ever know such-truck as this like we all do, oh Suzy Q.

Fat Suzy: *(pauses, tilts head, whines long, glares directly into Delmont's eyes)*

Delmont Hamilton: You know what's really funny, Suzy? I probably shouldn't tell this now, so please don't go 'round talkin' about it. The other night some shiners came into Shepard's there, where Clan Hamilton haunts. *(laughs)* Well ole man Raymond Burney was with us that night. You know, ole crazy Raymond Burney, who'll do anything if somebody strikes him wrong. Well, ole Raymond decided to put a stop to this nonsense. So he packed in a square flashlight battery, some wire, a good rattrap, and a duck taped bundle of four dynamite sticks with electrical blasting caps. We were gonna toss the bundle and spring a big one on the shiners. So much for competitors on our turf.

Fat Suzy: *(pauses, head tilted, glaring directly into Delmont's eyes, slowly whining)*

Delmont Hamilton: You won't believe what happened next, ole Suzy. I can't stop laughing about it. We fixed the whole dumb batch of 'em good! I'll tell ya all about it, here and now. Bot that time we got into the area good, we heard a ruckus up Lolly Lackland's

creek, so we all took cover. Lo an' behold it was the
revenueers canoeing downstream in the creek up above us at a
nice clip. Suzy, even you could have told they were citified by
the way they all rowed. The whole deal was down right funny!
I can't get over it.

So ole Raymond says to us, "help me set this deal up boys, and
we kin git on with it. We can kill two birds with the same
dumb stone, if we move quick a-nough." So we did. Ole
Raymond had already drilled a hole through the body of
the rattrap. This he tacked carefully up on a nearby tree. He
took duck tape and taped one skint end of the wire to the hot
end of the battery. Wrapped a skint end of the wire to the
striking side of the trap, then he fixed another end onto the
electric cap of the dynamite. There was enough loose wire
where he could toss the blastin' bundle into a tree across a limb
high over the creek. Once he ran the opposite end around the
base of the trap underneath the striker, the circuit could be
sealed when the trap fired. A small twig cut off at a forty five
degree angle and inserted 'neath the striker kept us all safe for
the moment, however. One slip of the touch 'n the devil would
have been with us, for sure.

Fat Suzy: *(tilts head, clucks, pecks grain, scratches)*

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah Suzy, that was easy enough, but the toughest part was last
of all. Raymond sent me o'er the creek with a string O' fishin'
line. This I pulled tight, then tied it onto the bait tray. Once
Pap set the striker, the rig was in, and we all eased out of the
combat zone at a rather quick clip, let me tell ya Suzy Q.

(Laughs) Once we made it out to the lookout point over on
Roosters Ridge, I saw the whole dumb creek basin light up in
the dark of midnight. We all left out of that area like foxes with
fire coals poured onto our tails. Let me tell ya ole girl, them

shinners must have shucked inside their coveralls when they walked into them ragin' revenueers!

I figger if they didn't catch them shinners there are some mighty terrified shinners who'll never come back into Shepard's Holler again, and some dumb and now deaf revenueers wondering what happened that they still can't seem to untangle. *(laughs)* I swear, one day in future times somebody somewhere 'll be writin' books about all of this crazy mess around here. Don't you think so, Suzy Girl?

Fat Suzy: *(clucks loudly)*

Delmont Hamilton: *(sighs deeply)* Somehow I'm gonna get out of this place. I like it here, and I've had the time of my life, but one day I'm gonna find a higher plateau to climb, Suzy. I don't know what I'm a gonna do, but I'm flying out O' ole Meadowshire one Day.

Fat Suzy: *(cackles loudly)*

Delmont Hamilton: What's it, ole Suzy Q? I kin tell, oh girl. I see the way ya cackle an' that look in yer eye, somethin' 's a comin'. What's it now? Give me the word. Might it be haint or human?

Heavy booted footsteps head in Delmont's direction

Fat Suzy: *(screams loudly and runs in the opposite direction)*

Enter grandPa

Delmont Hamilton: I knew it. It had to be grandPa.

grandPa: *(steps around the corner into the pen)* Boy, yer Pap is fuming like a mad donkey. What in tarnation ails ya?

Delmont Hamilton: What ails him so?

grandPa: Well boy, now you had them corn stalks to cut and feed to the hogs, and it still hasn't yet been done.

Delmont Hamilton: You mean the ones in the garden?

grandPa: No boy, now you know better 'n that! I'm talkin' bout the one's o'er on ole man Top Coleman's place.

Delmont Hamilton: Well, I thought we were gonna make beer 'n mash out of 'em.

grandPa: Now boy, don't gimme them high rock oysters, I know you know better! When yer Pap gits through skinnin' you alive, you won't be able to sit down fer a dumb week.

Delmont Hamilton: I don't get it grandPa.

grandPa: You don't git it? Is that what I heard you say? Well you know good 'n dumb well we made last year's dry shuckins into still fodder. All four of them stills are up 'n runnin as we stand here a-speakin'!

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah, (*sighs*) come to think of it, they are grandPa. Will it be Treble run?

grandPa: There you go again, boy. A course it will be! Us Hamiltons make and sell nothing less but the top of the line best. I ought to whoop ya myself for askin' such an all fired dim question to me like that!

Delmont Hamilton: I didn't mean to stir ya up like that.

grandPa: Well, an' them stills is another thang, boy. You, Jimbo, and Bo Hump needs to go babysit them thangs for the next week. Its yer turn to burn this batch. You uns pour it back in, and me, yer Pap, and Devin 'll do the

next one, an then you kin live free fer a week. You uns kin spend yer time cookin' bar meat 'n potatoes by the flames on the side, 'n takin' sample shots 'n dancing to the music of the thump keg. How's that fer livin' free?

Delmont Hamilton: I got ya grandPa. When do ya want us down there?

grandPa: I want all O' this done now. Dark should see you 'n the others o'er by the still cavern on Stymies Ridge there by Shepard's Holler.

Delmont Hamilton: Tell Pap I'll get a move on it now.

grandPa: (*stands frozen, stares, shakes head*) My word boy, what in tarnation er we gonna do with ya?

Delmont Hamilton: What's it now, grandPa?

grandPa: Boy, er you in need O some intimate conversation, er somethin' ?

Delmont Hamilton: (*laughs, shrugs*) I don't know, maybe.

grandPa: Well I seen ya a talkin' 'n a carryin' on with them chickens jest like 'twas yer best love er somethin'. (*shakes head from side to side*) I've never in my whole life, 'n I'm might-neigh eighty year old.

Delmont Hamilton: (*laughs*) Well it takes stress off'n the liver, and besides that, ole Fat Suzy there listens and even gives decent replies at times when I really need one.

grandPa: (*turns away, walks, mumbling, shaking head from side to side*) Well my stars and bars, I've never seen the likes of that boy in my whole life. If me 'n his Pa aint careful, we'll walk 'round the corner here one day, er maybe one night, an' we'll catch him a jiggin' chicken.

Delmont Hamiton: (*explodes into laughter*) What did I hear ya say grandPa? Did

you say what I think you did?

grandPa: (*pauses, turns around*) I said, if'n ya feel desperate enough fer attention like that, Ezra Greech still runs the Red Lantern Inn o'er on Yagman's Corner up town here. Been in business since way back before the Civil War. I know Ezra well. Drank many a pint with him O' the best treble run. I kin have 'im fetch ya a good, clean, attractive one. Jest let us know, boy. Don't worry, good women always love men who trim the hedge best. One night of stress relief 'll ne'er hurt. (*turns back around, walks*)

Delmont Hamilton: Naw, that's alright grandPa. I'll stay clean and without, until I stumble on a good one heaven sent, to none other than myself. The good Lord 'll take care O' me. (*explodes into laughter*)

grandPa, Fat Suzy, Delmont Hamilton, exit

Scene 2

Midnight in Shepherd's Hollow

Enter Delmont Hamilton

The others follow in single file behind

Delmont Hamilton: (*sings in a whisper as he gently walks along*) Five hundred pounds of sugar, a brand new copper worm, a welded up copper pot 'n a pile O' split wood fer a good fire to burn. We're pouring it all into barrels, boys, we'z all a stirrin' the magic churn, good flow 'll come out in swirls, all shall be perfect fer the next fine turn.

Jimbo: (*sings as he paces gently along*) Witch's brew 'll pour out soon, with good

deer cabbage and a bourbon tinted creek 'neath such a perfect full moon.
Nymph's 'll all be a dancin' when King Puck comes out a prancin'. We'll
gim um a jug and a sweet tobacco plug, cause we'll have big money when
ole cap'n Dololly takes a slug, and any O' you who don't believe?, well
you all jest wait 'n see!

Bo Hump: (*Whispers in a song as he paces gently along*) Can't ya hear that thump
keg boys? It makes such a beautiful noise, just a thumpin' whilst we
take to jumpin', an' them mason jars are bein' filled with moonshine.
Oh how for that splendid feeling the masses do pine!

Devin: (*whispers*) Hugh! You boys shut up! I hear sticks a-snappin' in the
distance. I sense revenueurs are about 'round in here now! The last thing any
of us need to do is to attract unwanted attention. We've been so lucky thus
far. I'm a layin' fer 'em, to speak the truth. I got a rake in the hay set fer
'em. They'll hit it, but they'll be madder 'n all git out when they do. I wish
I hadn't of put it in now. They'll know they're close when they hit that
thang.

Delmont Hamilton: You idiot! They'll have the troops back up in here, is what 'll
Happen.

Devin: Why do ya say that Delmont?

Delmont Hamilton: I'll bet you spiked that split river cane with a fire hardened
cane round, didn't you?

Devin: Well, what's the use in makin' a rake in the hay set unless its spiked? I tried
the split cane by itself and they didn't get the message.

Delmont Hamilton: You idiot! When that spike is stuck slam through one O' them
revenueurs, they'll have Pharaoh's whole army snoopin' around
in here searchin' us and our stash out. Once we make it in to
the still way, you go an' take that mess down Devin.

Devin: Well I'm scared to do that tonight like that with them stick's a snappin' like they are. I'll be cuffed and run out O' here faster 'n ole grandPa's best.

Delmont Hamilton: That's tough stuff. Tonight that rig is going to come down. The last thing any of us need is a revenuer down on the ground with a nine inch spike run through him.

Devin: What if I git locked up?

Delmont Hamilton: We'll bail ya out. That rig is comin' down tonight. So you go now boy. Give three bullfrog whumps before ya walk back in amongst us whilst we're all at still. No use in one O' us a cuttin' loose with a load O' buckshot in yer direction.

Devin: Well I ain't crazy 'bout it, but what e'er ya say, Delmont.

Demont Hamilton: Hasty now, hasty, we need the manpower round here.

Devin exits

Enter Delmont, Bo Hump, and Jimbo by the stills in the cave at Stymie's Ridge

Jimbo: That thump keg is better 'n at makin' music than the radio over at yer granPap's place, Delmont.

Delmont Hamilton: We'll all soon be singin' all the way to the bank.

Bo Hump: I'll sing to my holler cypress tree stash. The bank lost my faith long ago, and my whole family as well. I don't know about yourn.

Delmont Hamilton: These new fangled savings plans let me earn interest. How does your money fetch you any profit, Bo?

Bo Hump: I invest mine in liquor, treble run, and nothin' less. It still sells out at top dollar ever time.

Jimbo: Yeah, if you don't go an' drink it all, (*laughs*) you crazy know it all.

Bo Hump: (*looks at Jimbo*) You know who I'm worried about round here most of all these days, boy?

Jimbo: Don't have a clue, who?

Bo Hump: Ole Delmont there.

Jimbo: Really? What's it?

Bo Hump: He's been all edgy and actin' strange lately, like his granPap tellin' us about him talkin' to the chickens, a carryin' on a lengthy conversation. Hadn't you noticed?

Jimbo: Yeah, come to think of it, he has. (*turns to face Delmont*) So what's up doc? What's eatin' ya, bub?

Delmont Hamilton: (*sighs*) I don't know. It's kind a-like this. You boys ever wonder what lies out of Meadowshire here?

Bo Hump: There's nothin' outside O' Meadowshire. Ever-thang we ever need is right here. There's nothin' but darkness 'n evil outside a-these borders. You know what the preacher tells us all ever Sunday. Anybody who dares exit out 'll only wind up dead and a-smolderin' in hell.

Jimbo: That's what they all told us in school.

Delmont Hamilton: You be quiet boy! You never went to any school.

Jimbo: Yeah, but all of our parents and ever-body in town tells us that. The liquor we sell is to people right there in town. Ever-thang we'll ever need is right there in that town.

Bo Hump: I know folks who've never left town before. They tell me nothin but darkness, chaos, and death lies out there, and man-beasts rather than Men. So I'm dumb shore stayin' rich 'ier fer the rest O' my life.

Delmont Hamilton: I read books. I know there's somethin' else out there for me. I want the best that life has to offer myself. I want the adventure of experiencing better and something different.

Jimbo: Well, all I kin say to you Delmont, is fer you to fetch some more wood fer that still, then go fetch them gallon jugs underneath the worm on them other three. You'll have to replace 'em, now. Stash 'em good over yonder in the cleft on the stone wall. Bo Hump and me 'll check the mash level in these stills whilst ya do that now. Any backset left inside needs cleanin' out. We'll use it fer hog bait near Porky's Sandcastle. You know, out yonder where them big boars come from.

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah, guess you're right. I'll get a move on.

Three cricket chirps in sudden succession, pause, then three more

Bo Hump: Hugh, what 've we heard? Hugh, now.

Jimbo: I hear heavy breathin', take cover, quick!

All scatter into the surrounding vegetation

Enter Devin

Devin: *(pauses behind a large live oak)* Howl! Soooey! Hoo, hoo, hoo!

Delmont Hamilton: *(steps out of cover)* I thought it was you son, but we couldn't take any chances.

Devin: I took my set up down, but somebody had been movin' around over yonder. Tracks don't lie, Delmont. One O' them boot tracks had the print of a big

nail, a smaller ‘un, and another big nail on it, at a diagonal angle. I figure he does it that way because he gets a tighter refit on his boot heel.

Jimbo: And only one man does his boots that way, and we all know who that is,
Right?

Bo Hump: Yeah, ole Jay Fergusson, the chief revenuer from El Dego downstream
a ways from Meadowshire.

Delmont Hamilton: Is El Dego a bad place Hump?

Bo Hump: It's like hell. That's why ole Fergusson moved here to Meadowshire, up
in Porter's Point.

Jimbo: Well do tell, eh? That's where them people with the attitude are, over the
railroad tracks there. El Dego, I remember the name well.

Devin: Yeah, they all are bad, comin' from that place. They get their kicks a-tryin'
to suck up to the government like they do and catch us all in somethin'
over here.

Delmont Hamilton: Some good lookin' women come from over that way. I swear
all of 'em I ever laid eyes on had a dandy face and body that
would stop a freight train to go with it.

Jimbo: I'll let you all in on a secret. I had a good go with maybe five of 'em
Already.

Bo Hump: Don't you dare try and shuck us son. We know you've been to The Red
Lantern. Ninety five percent of the women he keeps comes from over
yonder in El Dego. So tell us how much ya paid. All of them
El Dego women are mercenary now.

Jimbo: I traded out a gallon of shine. She split it with her own Pap, 'n her Pap lent
me his own bed so's I could take her out to pasture. Personally, I couldn't

believe it myself.

Bo Hump: So how long ago was this?

Jimbo: Maybe two nights ago, but I had been droppin' by for might near two weeks steady.

Devin: Ya feel any burnin', or pain in ya lower stomach?

Jimbo: No, can't say as I have, right off hand.

Bo Hump: Any white discharge, son?

Jimbo: Yeah, a bit last night, but no pain. What of it?

Devin: My word man, your goose is cooked! You hear me? An' ya come back fer seconds and thirds, eh?

Bo Hump: Well Delmont, we had better get all we can out O' him tonight. Why don't we move the stash we already have? We kin put it up over by Crazy Woman Creek, high up in the cliff wall yonder. We all kin sleep yonder to boot, just to stay safe.

Delmont Hamilton: Sounds like a fine idea. Let's move on it now. The coast should be clear tomorrow night. We can move the stash back down, clean out the back sludge, purge out the stills, then pour the batch we jest cooked up back inside the still. In a week we all kin be sittin' out loungin' and sippin', plugin' a few deer and pig for the fodder, whilst our other crew cooks the third run of it.

Devin: Yeah, I like the sound of that third run, otherwise known as the Golden Run.

Jimbo: The Money Run.

Delmont Hamilton: *(laughs)* Yeah, but you ole Jimbo.. *(shakes his head)* You'll be over at Aunt Saddle Bizzell's rooster ranch.

Jimbo: Well I ne'er hear-ed of her myself. Who is she?

Delmont Hamilton: She's mite-near the only doctor around fer many miles. She works on animals and men fer miles around. Loads of prune juice, five pound of white sumac root powdered, of the small red kind two pounds, one double hand full of black or dew berry brier root, a double handful of persimmon bark. This is all boiled down in ten or twelve gallons of water, then strained. I see a whole big coffee can of it with your name written all over It, come tomorrow, son!

Devin: You'll be drinkin' 'n a-shuckin' yourself into a skeleton, but you'll learn not to play with hornet's nests when ya finally do heal. At least, all of us hope you'll learn yer lesson.

Delmont Hamilton: Well, let's git this run moved and stashed. It's might-neigh twelve hundred gallon jugs here. At midnight tomorrow we kin drop the run back into the stills. We'll take turns sittin' 'n standin' on point till we git this mess run back out and stashed up again. Jimbo should be hurt sore by then, and in big need of relief *(laughs)*.

All the others laugh

Delmont, Devin, Bo Hump, Jimbo exit

Scene 3

Midnight back down by the stills

Enter Delmont, Bo Hump, and Devin

Devin: Has the last jug been taken down?

Delmont Hamilton: I believe Bo Hump 'll be walkin' the final one in soon.

Devin: Want 'll we do with Jimbo? He's rolling around on the cave floor in deep Pain. (*laughs*) It seems like he will learn his lesson some time.

Delmont Hamilton: Sometimes I say that about us now, doing this. Clan Hammilton has been runnin' shine for more than three hundred years. Back when we lived in the Scottish hill country we were runnin' shine. It's sure been a fun action filled life, but is the risk really worth it?

Devin: Have any of ya ever been caught at it? I don't recollect if so.

Delmont Hamilton: Uncle Jeb just got out of the can last month. He pulled two years in the Federal pen, bustin' big rocks into little ones, all day long. It broke 'im. He's out. He'll cook up a small batch fer home use and casual sales, but that's about it. His big times at still are over forever.

Devin: I hear footsteps in the woods around here in the day time. I can't believe how they all overlook this holler where our operation is.

Enter Bo Hump with a filled gallon jug in his hand

Bo Hump: Better be on our wares boys. People are movin' about in here.

Delmont Hamilton: Think that's King Puck and his fairy patrol.

Bo Hump: He'll turn a dime, won't he?

Delmont Hamilton: Not if we pay 'im in hooch. That's all he's a-wantin'.

Bo Hump: How'd he earn such a name?

Delmont Hamilton: All he had were women, but these women are not like any other. They can cook shine, hide, and fight better 'n half the men out there.

Bo Hump: How do they look?

Delmont Hamilton: Better N a ten point buck on the ground in front of my gun, and that's a beautiful sight, mind ya!

All three begin opening the copper still pots, cleaning them out

Devin: We must scrub well with clorox bleach before we reload these things. Let's lay the sludge in one spot. I'll ease out and put it where we bait the hogs, soon as we reload these stills.

footsteps approaching, all take cover in the woods

Enter King Puck

King Puck: Hallo! Hallo! Tis OK Hamilton, 'tis only Puck, with more fun to give you uns than a ten point buck.

Enter Delmont Hamilton

Delmont Hamilton: I figured 'twas only you I hear'd walkin' round in these Woods.

King Puck: Where are the others?

Delmont Hamilton: Out N about. Shouldn't walk up on a man's operation like this.

Some don't live to tell about it.

King Puck: I don't, generally speaking, but now isn't the first time for me here.

Delmont Hamilton: Where are your good lookin' assistants Puck?

King Puck: Out N about. I have one who is mercenary though. You interested? I need three good jug fulls.

Devin: Which one?

King Puck: Georgia Moon. She's totes the most beautiful moon mankind has ever dared to kiss.

Delmont Hamilton: I know Georgia. I didn't know that about her, but I know her. I used to play with her as a pup, right over yonder back at Pap's place.

King Puck: You interested Hamilton? A shot O' smooth treble goes down well in her company.

Delmont Hamilton: Well I was speaking fer ole Devin yonder. I'm too busy myself for any side line action. I do know Georgia though, and I thought I knew her pretty well, at that.

King Puck: Boy these 'er tough times round about in these parts. Person's got a do what they got a do. Most O' her turns are with locals. One day she wants to do the right thang and marry. It'll come. I know cause she drank Hemlock Hilda's magic potion. It'll happen, but she's still free and available for you boys at the moment.

Delmont Hamilton: Well this here batch has to be cooked down. In four days I'll be back over at Pap's, and him and grandPa 'll be back here cookin' the third run. You and Georgia meet me over there then. The good stuff 'll be there a waitin' fer ya.

King Puck: It's a done deal, boy. Just thought I'd pass the word on. The revenuers
'er movin' about. They haunt the area a-lookin' fer stills and pig
hunters. Be on ya wares boys.

Delmont Hamilton: Appreciate the heads up. We'll catch ya around.

King Puck: We'll be around.

King Puck exits

Delmont Hamilton: Boys, you heard the man. I know he seems crazy, and he is, but
trouble is a brewin' all around us. All of us gotta get a move
on. Let's get this stuff cleaned out of these four pots, and his
fresh batch poured in. 'Twill be mornin' time soon now.

Devin: Once we git this shine poured in, one of us needs to lay up in here and
babysit to make sure it doesn't vaporize, and to water the fires a bit if it
does. The other two can lay out, and we'll all take our turn at babysittin' 'till
the batch is cooked. This 'll be less of us around to git caught bein' at still.

Bo Hump: Delmont an' me 'll make our rounds while you babysit the rest of the
evening and tomorrow. I fear we might need to route this trouble I sense
away from here. We might even need to relocate these stills, if trouble
should find us. (*faces Delmont*) Come on. Lets git!

Bo Hump and Delmont Hamilton exit

Stage lights darken gradually. Five minutes later they brighten

Out in the surrounding mountain woods

*Enter Bo Hump and Delmont Hanilton walking quietly, double barrel shotguns in
hand*

Bo Hump: Hugh! Hear that, mane?

Delmont Hamilton: Hear what?

Bo Hump: Hear them jays suddenly quieten down?

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah, I heard it. I hear that Indian Hen in the distance. I know it won't us who upset her. Somebody 's a movin' around in here. I swear the ole gal ne'er lies, Hump man.

Bo Hump: Yeah, we'll pause here 'n set still. The tiger a-huntin' us 'll show his-self soon.

Delmont Hamilton: (*audible whispers*) Gotta give that ole tiger credit, hoss, he don't make a single sound when he walks.

Bo Hump: What chu reckon we'll do when he does?

Delmont Hamilton: (*smiles confidently*) I got my own lay fer him, ole Hump mane.

Bo Hump: What chu mean, you psychopath?

Delmont Hamilton: Just what I said. He left a trail, and he's dumb enough to come back in at the same place. I've been a-watchin' his sign fer a long time. Mother Ruth saw 'im when the fly cloud flew into the fire in her yard hearth. As she gazed into the flame and smoke, the way they fell revealed a vision to her. She warned me, Hump, and she don't lie or misread either. She tole me right where to set my lay, and I did.

Sticks snap up ahead, heavy footsteps on dry leaves

Bo Hump: (*audible whispers*) Hugh boy! Hush now, shhh, lay low, she's a-comin'.

Three armed men wearing badges break through the brush. They turn to the left. A massive explosion roars out from the far left ahead of them. Shot rains through the leaves and trees. The three run back toward the right, terrified for their lives. All is quiet again.

Bo Hump: My word, son, whate'er that was woke the dead! Who was it, fer cryin' out loud?

Delmont Hamilton: That was none other than ole Fergusson his-self, king O' revenueurs in these parts.

Bo Hump: Well you've lost your mind now. He'll be back with Pharaoh's army lookin' fer us. Our goose is hash!

Delmont Hamilton: No he won't. It's just time fer a payoff. I'll send Jimbo back home to grandPa 'N Pap to give 'em word. Ole Fergusson saunters through periodically only to let us know it's payday fer him, that's all.

Bo Hump: How do you know it was him? All of 'em wore wide brim straw hats an' bandanas over their faces.

Delmont Hamilton: I kin tell by the way he walks. The other two are the sheriff and the deputy. It'll be alright Humpus Dumpus. You'll still be able to hump hand 'er high tail, so don't worry about it, sleep Tight. *(explodes into laughter)*

Bo Hump: *(shakes his head from side to side)* I hope so. I can't believe how crazy even you have become, of late. This whole dumb place is at least a bubble off plumb!

Stage lights dim until dark. Bo Hump and Delmont Hamilton exit

Scene 4

Morning time back at the still site

Enter Devin & Delmont Hamilton

Devin: I swear, there is so much more work to be done around here, and four hours sleep doesn't quite cut it. Somethin' must give, and soon.

Delmont Hamilton: Well I'm strong. This cup of cassina I brewed here on the still flame 'll carry me through.

Devin: What else needs doin'? I want to get everything cleaned so I kin lay back in a cool corner here and cat nap.

Delmont Hamilton: Well there 're bags from all the sugar, corn shucks, 'n corn cobs layin' around. Lets get everything cleaned up around this still site. We have wood chips around. Let's get it all up. No use in us tippin' off any revenue or potential enemy passing Through while we're out.

Delmont, Devin, and Bo Hump busy themselves

Twenty minutes later

Delmont Hamilton: Look Devin, ever-thing is cleaned up well and good, I feel. Hump and me are gonna go back into Monk's Cavern up on Rooster's Ridge. You lay here 'n babysit the golden run today. We'll do it tomorrow. We kin trade like that until all four stills run it back out completely. It shouldn't take but maybe four more days and nights.

Devin: No problem with me on that. I'll take my ease. If the fussil-oil wasn't so thick, I'd take a hearty shot.

Enter Bo Hump

Bo Hump: Yeah (*laughs*) and you'd shuck yourself so skinny, you'd be a skeleton we wouldn't even recognize upon our return. Besides, the first gallon or three we always run off and use for charcoal lighter fluid and such.

Delmont Hamilton: We'll catch ya later on after before sunrise tomorrow. The sun is almost ready to break, and I can't wait!

Bo Hump: Well you sure have more energy than me. All I want to do is find a dark corner and go out for a while.

Delmont Hamilton: I feel fit as fiddle myself. You head on over to Monk's Cavern, or stay here with Devin. I'm a goin' fer a walk myself.

Devin: Where are you headed out to? Got a woodshed dolly on the lolly line?
(*laughs*) Hey, hey, now, woah!

Delmont Hamilton: No, I'm gonna walk out to the great Riverboat Spread. The enchanted place of the Shawnee. I'm gonna sit fer a while 'n watch 'n think up on The Horned God's plateau.

Bo Hump: (*glares hard*) Yeah, I know what you're a thinkin. Now the world is a wicked, dark, and corrupt place outside O' ole Meadowshire. If your a dreamin' about sashayin' across 'er upstream into foreign lands, all there is are kingdoms of the devil, I tell ya. They talk about this all the time in church. I mean, we trade our liquor and get our kicks, but it's among our own kind; bein' the people of God, rather than among the sons and daughters of Satan.

Delmont Hamilton: I don't know. You both know I'm a man of adventure. I dare to take my chances. I could easily die right here, doin' what we do. I might venture out, boys, but I'll be back after midnight. Hump, you 'n Devin take yer ease. I'm gone. (*turns and walks out*)

Bo Hump: Yeah, you be careful Delmont, now. That ole spread is more 'n a mile across, so I've always been told. A big city called The Devil's Den is somewhere over there. There's a bunch of disease infected people who will kill ya and eat ya, so I've always been told. I never wanted to go there myself. I've also heard that in The Devil's Den, Uncle Sam wears lipstick and a dress. Only God knows what other debauchery he is given to.

Devin: Yeah, you be real-careful, now, Delmont. I wanna see you come home in one piece. You are aware that according to the preacher last summer, to venture out of these boundaries means certain death.

Delmont Hamilton: See you all later on. I'd worry all the time if I worried about dying.

Bo Hump: If you're caught out without permission, it's certain death anyway. You're cohortin' with Satan accordin' to the burmister here. You know the law in Meadowshire here, Delmont. We don't cotton to weirdos or any with the scrambled-up ideas of those.

Stage lights dim out. Bo Hump and Devin exit

Three minutes later, stage lights gradually ease back on

Delmont Hamilton is standing on the shore overlooking an area of the Shawnee River known as The Great Riverboat's Spread. On the other side he makes out a faint glimpse of what appears to be a shimmer of activity just beyond the trees. A log here and there floats on the river. There is no sign of people. He glances up at the rather imposing plateau on the mountainside some seven stories up. He begins his ascent up.

On top of the plateau

Delmont Hamilton: *(takes down his knapsack, opens it, removes four candles,*

three white, one black. Makes a triangle, with the black candle in the center, lights them all) Oh spirit of the unseen, hailing from those lands of exotic mystery, a son of man calls, anticipation of new adventure is his cause, into an infinite forward flowing mist, his soul is beckoned. Will ye lead this poor mortal making appeal in such need?

Response: *(only the whispering wind)*

Delmont Hamilton: *(gazing out across the wide river toward the opposite side)* Oh spirit of ancient trappers, of buffalo hunters, of warriors, of gamblers, of thrill seekers, of confidence men, and all those who dare to live mortal lives to the fullest; do ya hear my Earnest call? I yearn to venture afar.

Response: *(only the whispering wind, but slightly stronger)*

Delmont Hamilton: From earliest childhood, a fellow brethren I am. I've heard the tales, how we're to fear and live afraid, that the only good is where I presently dwell, and among whom I am surrounded. No books speaking of anything beyond the local precinct exist in Meadowshire's local library, nothing is revealed on maps, nobody anywhere here speaks of anything outside of Meadowshire. I long to know the truth. Lead me to it.

Voice on the wind from behind: *(a voice of wind)* You son of man, behold the eastward bend in yon river.

Delmont snaps around, yet sees nothing

Voice on the wind from the left side: Behold thy beacon on the stroke of nine. A princess in the sacred motion, an exotic kingdom, pleasure beyond measure surely awaits. So don't hesitate long, lest ye perish and thy soul be forever absorbed into a realm of indefinite ignorance.

Delmont Hamilton: I find nourishment in my sack, oh great one, I sit and contemplate. Where lies my future destiny? Where might my name become great? Are you revealing to me my chosen way? Shall my name live for all eternity? All I truly want is to have my golden day!

Voice on the wind from the right side: Beware what thou has already wished for.
Dwell in happiness upon thy golden shore.
Thy future has already been written in the wind. Thy prophesied destiny is soon to Commence.

Does not the stag and the falcon live by the day? Does not the fawn and the coney somehow find their way? Does not the sparrow and the lamb find plenty of nourishment? Is not the shelter of the mole and the fox heaven sent? Do not my words ring forever true, son of man, how more so shall fare the likes of you.

A deep sleep soon overtakes Delmont Hamilton. When he awakens on the ground, far across the wide river, maybe a mile away on what appears to be a tower of stone, burns a column of flame. Even from so far away it illuminates the nighttime sky brilliantly. An eerie powerful sensation on the inside motivates him to desire being closer in.

Delmont Hamilton: Oh great one, tonight is not my night. I behold a column of flame from far beyond the water before me. (*glances down at his pocket watch*) Another night, another night, duty calls. (*he turns and begins walking back toward the still site*)

Stage lights gradually dim out. Delmont Hamilton exits

Scene 5

Midnight back at the still site

Enter Delmont Hamilton, Devin, Bo Hump

Delmont Hamilton: How does it go?

Devin: Drip drip, it's a fine bit, guaranteed to get a person ripped. Those who refuse to believe can soon find relief, pull the cork and take a sip.

Bo Hump: It's smooth as silk and calm as milk, but tip the cup or howl like a pup, but remain calm to experience this corn bomb.

Delmont Hamilton: You two make me feel you've already tipped a cup or three.

Devin: We've sampled, shiners prerogative ya know.

Bo Hump: Yeah, one gets good 'n thirsty a-dancin' to the music of a thump keg.

Delmont Hamilton: (*chuckles, shakes his head*) I bet so. Any excitement whilst I was gone?

Devin: You missed it, Hoss. You missed it big time! (*laughs*)

Bo Hump: Yeah, I mean, you really missed it, Delmont. You missed it, good, real Good!

Delmont Hamilton: Well tell me all about it. I wanna know what I missed.

Devin: You remember King Puck I know, right?

Delmont Hamilton: Of course I do! What about him?

Devin: Well, he dropped by like he said he would.

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah? What about it?

Bo Hump: Well, he came by and he wasn't alone either. He has sweet Georgia Peach and Amber Sunshine with him son., and golly Molly Rae was ole Georgia a good one down on the fly, Hoss! You wouldn't believe it, Delmont. You just wouldn't believe it! That ole gal didn't hold back on anything. I declare I've never seen a set of sweet red lips look better on a sword swallower even at the best Barnum an' Bailey show.

Devin: (*laughing hysterically and nonstop*) And ole Amber Sunshine was ever bit as dumb crazy, man. Ole Georgia smiled soon as she walked through the entrance there, declarin' aloud to both of us that she was in great need of a nice rooster standin' at full attention, to go along with the fat peach she held there. It couldn't be anything less than right to make her gobble an' cluck.

Bo Hump: (*laughing uncontrollably*) While we played caboose hooking up to their backsides, both of them hooked up on the front ends. Son I went hog Wild a grittin' my teeth, let me tell ya! I thought ole Devin there would have a heart attack. He slung his hay maker so hard he had a back draft on his breathing and started snortin' ever bit like a goat sounds. I wish you could of been here, Man!

Devin: Hey Delmont man., he had another one in need with 'im.

Delmont Hamilton: (*chuckles, shakes his head*) So who was she?

Devin: She called herself Lola Daisy.

Delmont Hamilton: She stripped down and petted her kitty cat right there whilst we were both in action. We asked her why didn't she join in with us, but she said she was savin' herself all fer you! (*laughs hysterically*)

Delmont Hamilton: Awe, don't shuck and jive me like that (*laughs*).

Bo Hump: Naw, it's for real man. That really happened. She said she was comin' back fer ya tonight.

Delmont Hamilton: Naw, no way she said that.

Bo Hump: Well you gotta face the music Delmont. (*laughs*) That woman is after You.

Delmont Hamilton: If it really happened, then how much extra did you agree to pay ole King Puck? Nothin' comes for free, especially them kinds of favors. I think he originally said he wanted three gallons of treble run. So tell me boys, how much? Sounds like you uns couldn't resist spikin' up our tab.

Bo Hump: (*pauses, glances over at Devin*) We agreed to give him three additional gallons of treble run.

Delmont Hamilton: Six gallons! (*shakes head side to side*) I knew it man, I knew it. I knew somethin' was gonna go down whilst I was away. And when both of ya come down with black gonzo grunge you'll want a-fetch at least that same amount over to the witch doctor like Jimbo has. Come on!

Bo Hump: (*places right arm on Delmont's shoulders*) Relax ham bone there. All dirt comes out in the wash. Besides we've even got you in on the action will ola miss Lola there!

Delmont Hamilton: (*chuckles*) I'm too busy with my own things. But don't you dare trade out all of our liquor before we even cook it up.

Devin: Oh you kin forgive us fer partakin' in a little side action here. We'll both be good li'le boys from now on.

Delmont Hamilton: This run 'll be cooked back out in two more days. I'm gonna help both of ya tonight 'n stick around to babysit the still. Four o'clock before sunrise I'm gonna shag out fer awhile, then wakeup after sunrise. When I leave out it might be midnight before I make it back.

Bo Hump: What's it mutton-monger? I see you've got yer own side sly there, eh?

Delmont Hamilton: No, nothin' O' the sort. I got much to do and am doin'. I'll tell ya bout it in time.

Bo Hump: Well Delmont, you better watch yer-self now. You know I could always sense things now, 'n my gut sense ain't goin' very good fer you rite about now.

Stage lights gradually dim out.. Devin, Bo Hump exit. Three minutes later the lights gradually brighten back on

1000 hrs

Back at the Great Riverboat's Spread

On the Horn God's Plateau

Enter Delmont Hamilton

Delmont Hamilton: *(opens his nap sack, takes out three white candles and one black. Arranges white candles in a triangle before him as he sits facing the wide surging river. He places the black one in the center. He lights all)* Oh great one, lord of adventurers, master of risk takers, king of all those who dare to step outside of their comfort zones when the risk is all or nothing, do you hear my call?

Momentary pause, no reply, whispering wind

Delmont Hamilton: To the ancient Greeks you were Atalanta. To the British you were Cernunnos, to the natives in America you were called Wakan Tanka. I long to feel the urge from a distant universe. I yearn to walk on new soil. My eyes ache to behold elegant people or more advanced humanistic beings. My mind is desperate for an intellectual awakening, since it only stagnates in that which surrounds me. Are you still present to heed my Call?

Momentary pause, no reply, only whispering wind from across the water

Delmont Hamilton: Oh, great one from beyond, have you abandoned me? Have you cast me into the void of history's forgotten intellectual wastrels, doomed only to drift through the world of man, satisfying only the most basic of biological desires? How I long to enter into a realm where elegant, sophisticated, immaculate beings thrive! I desperately desire to enter a place where opportunities for excellence truly do exist, and glittering advancement lies at the tips of one's fingers for the taking. Why can't I, too, not secure that reality in my firm grasp?

Momentary pause, no reply, only whispering wind from across the water. In the distance a raven soars across the water, soon turning, seemingly moving in Delmont's direction.

Delmont Hamilton: Where lies your sign, your cherished instruction, your rules for me to follow, that long dreamt path of brilliant red ruby leading to the glorious city of gold? If only you would give me a sign, send me a word, let me know something, what step, what direction, for how long should I tread where? Though I feel the wind blow into my face, there is not even a single flicker in the light of my candles. I feel as though jilted by a fabulous once in a lifetime lover. My world feels as if it yearns to end in a

crash of the waves upon these walls of stone. One way or
another I'll escape what fate has so callously thrust me into.

*Raven soars, then suddenly lands beside Delmont as he kneels before the triangle
of candles.*

Delmont Hamilton: Oh, might this be that special sign? At long last! How should it
be read? How should I interpret what I am bearing witness to?

Raven: From where does the wind blow? From where does the mighty river's
water flow? What makes it move? What cut the water's groove? Is there an
eye up high in the sky?

Delmont Hamilton: Those questions bear no answers, raven.

Raven: The wood fairies no longer have dancers. The deception was on you for
thinking that they do.

Delmont Hamilton: Raven, where lies the sense in your feeble song?

Raven: Delmont, the voice on the wind has done you no wrong.

Delmont Hamilton: The voice on the wind only makes me pine for that which is
still not yet mine.

Raven: Remember the beacon of nine? A princess of Xanadu shall then alight a
guiding flame. Once upon golden shore, nothing shall ever more be the
Same.

Delmont Hamilton: What, oh raven? How? Am I to fly? Will I live or will I die?

Raven: *(no reply)*

Delmont Hamilton: Who are you? What is your name? Are you my saving angel or
A cursed demon? Am I somehow to blame?

Raven: Aidh Damnu. Thy wanton yearning shall someday consume you. Now you have my name. Leading people on is my favorite game.

Delmont Hamilton: What shall I do? How shall I rectify my situation? Where shall this adventure finally lead me?

Raven: *(screams, then suddenly flies away)*

Stage lights dim out, Delmont Hamilton exits, curtains fall

Act Two

Scene 1

2100 hours

Down on the ground by the water's edge in front of The Horn God's Plateau

Enter Delmont Hamilton

Delmont Hamilton: Oh great one, I stand before the water's edge. I peer far into yon void. The water surges, sloshing gently upon the sand's edge where I presently stand. A shadow of a huge log hither and thither reaches out across the water of the mighty river, like so many arms on a shore bound monster. I behold it, piercing through the gloom and reflecting in the rippling water and the sky above. This beacon, this light into the greatest experience of my life so I have been told, is powerful. How might I make it across? Should I cut a raft? Then sign from the stumps will remain for all to behold and question, who shall soon deductively determine the cause of these fresh chops. To

merely exit Meadowshire stands beyond legality and is punishable by death, since wickedness and debauchery from beyond shall be transported back into these town limits, so goes the fears. Are there any words of wisdom remaining on my behalf?

Voice on the night wind: *(doesn't reply, only puffs gently)*

Delmont Hamilton: I clearly behold yon beacon of flame, upon a mighty pedestal of stone high upon the cliff edge. No boat can I possibly utilize, no raft, no wings, no great kite, no inglorious inner tube to be found. I'll strip to my waist, cast aside my shoes and shirt. *(removes shirt, socks, shoes)* My cutoff jeans shall suffice. Pockets filled with pouches of silver dollars shall suffice to make purchase of more, once on shore, if they don't weigh me down into the depths. Alas great one, please guide me along in this spectacular adventure. This swim shall be child's play for me. I've swam Beagle's lake an' Tecumseh's Branch. Beagle's Lake is broader, and Tecumseh's Branch is rougher.

Delmont Hamilton eases into the surging river water. He commences a slow steady swim toward the beacon of flame looming high upon the flat cliffside in the night distance. A steady breaststroke pulls him onward somewhat briskly. Bullfrogs along the shore give a steady whomp. In an hour and fifteen minutes he finds himself standing upon the opposite shore. High above upon the cliffside burns the beacon of flame. He sees no people or signs of habitation. For a few moments he lays upon his left side in the same, resting.

Delmont Hamilton: Oh, spirit of adventure, where have you taken me and dropped me off at? What cities and immaculate kingdoms flourish in such a grossly empty space? Where are the elegant intellectual people? Where is the art and grand accomplishment? All I behold are bare cliff walls, woods, the sound of bullfrogs, and Nightbugs.

Ahead a narrow path looms in the night gloom leading one up and seemingly through the cliff. Delmont Hamilton follows after regaining his strength. He passes through on a white sanded narrow walkway, after a ways he is standing upon a hillside overlooking a huge, immaculate city tucked away inside a cup shaped valley below.

Delmont Hamilton: *(gasping at the site)* Bless my eyes! I must be standing before the great city of Atlantis. Surly none anywhere could have been more glamorous than this.

Delmont Hamilton walks forward into the edge of the city. There he spies a man donning a faded robe of white.

Delmont Hamilton: Hello mate, who are you?

Man in white robe: I'm the local oracle.

Delmont Hamilton: How do you sustain yourself?

The oracle: By revealing the future course of events, of course.

Delmont Hamilton: What lies in my future?

The oracle: Toward the flames ye thought to fly, for the thrills of adventure ye have made a try. Oh, thy end shall be hard won. By the time ye find thy golden sun, then shall ye soon become undone.

Delmont Hamilton: Back home my family runs shine. I have cousins and friends on the thump keg at this very moment. It's been a family tradition for over three hundred years.

The oracle: Beware the good tidings, remain clear of the smiles. Wild arms also embrace, while mixed up minds entertain and beguile.

Delmont Hamilton: I listen, but still I shall venture inside. Only time knows the great pleasures I shall miss. (*walks on inside the town Limits, gazes around*) Where are the automobiles? Where are the hard surfaced roads? The classical architecture all around is beyond beautiful. (*spots a beautiful woman up against a wall*) What is with the flame by the cliff side?

Enter woman

Woman up against the wall: It's a beacon to the gods in the beyond.

Delmont Hamilton: What gods?

Woman up against the wall: The gods who dwell in the temple of Venus behind You.

Delmont Hamilton: (*turns, gasps*) I can't believe it! That temple is so beautiful. The marble has been totally polished into a perfect white. Oh great one, I can clearly observe your blessing in this place that you've delivered me. I must enter inside. Oh, how I must behold what most certainly is beyond any mortal's beholding.

Woman up against the wall: Tread softly, speak in whispers, never ask questions unless first asked. Smile, speak intelligently, feign complete sophistication.

Delmont Hamilton: I have to enter inside that complex. I cannot leave here tonight without doing so. Most certainly my eyes have witnessed Heaven.

Woman up against the wall: Tread softly up yon terraced hill face, and steps. Don't move suddenly to ward off regrets. Tiptoe quietly and venture inside, tonight you shall find your moment, determining if you should live or if you should die.

Delmont Hamilton: (*Walks up hill terrace and steps, opens huge wooden doors*)
Wonder of wonders, marvel of marvels, did the Gods move
down here from the skies? Surely this corrupted world of men
is one to be despised!

Low voice from within: Man from the fields, from whence did you arrive? Were
you invited? Did you simply dare to make a try?

Delmont Hamilton: I went on a great search for elegance and intellect. Here I am! I
could have never dreamed of such a place. This temple is
magnificent. The mysterious glinting walls, brilliant!

Low voice from within: Adventurer from across the water, in a small town of
infidels and insignificant. What do you seek from us?

Delmont Hamilton: Wise words, witty sayings, infallible advice would be so nice.

Low voice from within: You have traveled so far in search of your own star. You
have climbed so high, only to slip up and die? You seek to
be so wise, to discover your luxurious tool, but many in
years later on, shall swear you are a cursed fool.

Delmont Hamilton: Why, I'm fit as a fiddle and twice as nice. I can labor a little
and swim a mile thrice. So here I am after trudging through
thorns and sand. If I could rise up higher, 't-would be so grand.

Voice from within the temple: Thus, you are motivated by greed, you bear no need.
All of mankind is corrupt, but can they ever possess
enough? Only a simple cur is satisfied with his coat
of fur.

Delmont Hamilton: What must I do to enter inside this magnificent temple? I
deeply long to tour this premise.

Voice from within the temple: Oh wastrel from the dark earthy void beyond.

Behold! What building possesses the most stories?

Delmont Hamilton: Well, of course, a library!

Voice from within the temple: Oh corrupted son of man, what has thirteen hearts
but no other organs?

Delmont Hamilton: Well, only a deck of cards and nothing else.

Voice from within the temple: If one's uncle's sister is not one's aunt, then who is
She?

Delmont Hamilton: One's mother, and nobody else.

Voice from within the temple: If the person who made it doesn't need it. The
person who bought it doesn't want it. The person
who needs it doesn't know it. What is it? Fail to find
the answer and you have it!

Delmont Hamilton: Surely I stumble on its prospect.

Voice from within the temple: Do so, and find yourself with it.

Delmont Hamilton: If I was to make it, I wouldn't need it. Then it would be for
somebody else who doesn't want it or need it. This somebody
else then gives it to one who does need it, but does not know
it. Surely this could be nothing less than a coffin.

Voice from within the temple: Congratulations, you've verified the intellectual
qualification. Meet your angelic guide.

Enter guide, donning a purple toga
Appears walking from among inside columns

Delmont Hamilton: Surely you must be queen of this city.

Guide: I am a chief priestess and oracle to the worship of Venus. Welcome inside the eternal shrine of polished marble dedicated to the glory of Venus Adonis. On this night I am yours, and yours alone. You passed the test, Dared to walk upon a thin edge, so there you've earned your badge.

Stage lights dim out, Delmont and the guide exit

Scene 2

*Enter Delmont Hamilton and the guide
Inside the temple*

Delmont Hamilton: Tell me, oh dear priestess, about this temple and its grand significance. Are there any enemies of the temple? What is your position?

Guide: Back in the age when mighty Troy fell, many of the Mycenaeans and the Spartans from those days of old, settled here with their great pirated loot. Remember the Athenians rushed into Troy, put every living person and thing to the sword, ripped up everything that wasn't tied down, then stashed it carefully away into their ships. Primarily these ships sailed back to Mycenae, but not all of them. We all know of Odessia's great stray out into the distant seas, but there were also numerous others as well.

Plutarc writes of speaking with a stranger named Hippacartos who sailed to a distant westward contenant. Well Hippcaros made it up the Great Spread out there, and settled here. His men are said to have built this temple dedicated to the Venus Adonis. His men called this place Highland Haven, since the spot felt and appeared as they imagined heaven does.

Delmont Hamilton: How old is this structure, dear guide?

Guide: This temple is said to be thirty five hundred years old. These columns have

a long hard history.

Delmont Hamilton: What is your name?

Guide: Anastasia. What is your's?

Delmont Hamilton: Delmont. I come from Meadowshire, across the Great Spread out there.

Anastasia: I inherited this position of chief priestess to Venus Adonis. My priestly line here reaches back fifteen hundred years. It began with the wife of a king who was saved by my direct ancestor. This wife's savior had a wife, and as a gift his wife was made chief priestess.

Delmont Hamilton: That is a spectacular gift for a king to bestow on a person.

Anastasia: So what is your sustenance? How do you earn your daily bread?

Delmont Hamilton: My family runs shine. I am a moonshiner by trade. The business pays decently and such is a big deal this day and time. However, I sincerely do hope to gravitate out of this business one day.

Anastasia: Why, if it pays well and you like it?

Delmont Hamilton: It's illegal. We are always setting up traps for revenueurs or traps for competitors. It is only a matter of time before we are done for. I want to be far away when that day arrives.

Anastasia: Is it good-shine? Does it sparkle in the moonlight? Do the bubbles make and quickly burst upon being shaken? Does its flame burn pure blue?

Delmont Hamilton: It's only the very best. Take me through more of this temple. I can't wait to hear about it.

Anastasia: Walk with me. We are in the foyer at present, obviously, since we are in the area immediately behind the double folding doors. There are only more columns to be seen from here. So come, see how we hide the most magnificent sights in plain view, right before people's eyes. (*turns, begins walking*)

Delmont Hamilton: (*walks, pauses*) Wow, that is nice! What exactly is it?

Anastasia: We are now standing before a highly polished forty foot tall grand statue of Venus Adonis, and her wise golden elf midget she has standing upon her left shoulder. Her hair is of pure golden strands. Her beret is of solid emerald. She has stood here since the earliest of times.

Delmont Hamilton: Do your people actually worship her?

Anastasia: Shall we say her presence is highly revered, rather than worshiped?

Demont Hamilton: Who is the god your people worship?

Anastasia: (*smiles*) Walk with me. (*they walk gently along, pause*) We are in the sacred temple of Zeus. He is the chief god of the sky. We gather here during times of the full moon. We don't worship the statue, we only focus our direction of worship by focusing our eyes. Zeus is the father of all. (*turns, walks, pauses*)

Delmont Hamilton: Where are we standing now? Who is this huge statue holding
The huge three pronged fork?

Anastasia: This is the inner *Sekos* or Chamber of Poseidon, god of the sea. He is the second most powerful god among those who we cherish most of all. He is adored and feared above all others, but Zeus. The story of our Trojan conquest is a tale dedicated to Poseidon's glory. You know that, don't you Delmont?

Delmont Hamilton: How? I never knew this.

Anastasia: Poseidon is also the god of earthquakes and horses. Troy was invincible. For ten long years our forces assaulted the city walls, with no success. During this ten year assault it was noticed where a wall far from the Center yet with no additional barriers, was weaker than the others. A series of continuous earth tremors sparked an idea.

Our crack elitist forces stood veiled from view on the edge of this wall. The primary auxiliary forces concealed themselves in the bushes and tall grass surrounding the area. Extremely well crafted weapons, chariots, armor, and some bags of golden coins were left piled up at a slight distance in easy view of the Trojan citizens.

These walls finally crumbled when the earth trembled sharply. The citizens, taking notice of the fine clothing and armor piled up in the field, rushed out to claim their share when the wall finally collapsed. Our crack elitist troops rushed into the city, putting everything alive to the sword, ravishing the women, ripping up everything of value for the taking, and smashing what didn't go. The entire city was put to the torch eventually.

On the outside the Trojan citizens who rushed out to grab their share of These piled up goods were butchered down by the hidden auxiliary troops who quickly surrounded them. As Troy burned, Mycenaean ships were loaded with loot at full capacity, making the entire ten year venture far worth the spent effort.

Delmont Hamilton: When did Poseidon receive credit for this victory?

Anastasia: Seventy percent of our military were mercenaries. These mercenaries were shopkeepers, farmers, and some were poets. When word of Troy's defeat reached the masses everybody wanted to hear all about it. For the first seven years all a poet had to do was relay the account. The story coming from a direct veteran made all the difference. After the passage of seven years the tale needed a bit of elaboration to fetch the largest alms donation in the public areas near home. Soon poets were traveling

throughout the Aegean realm spreading the news, so those who dared to travel could simply retell the account as it occurred. In time, the entire realm was totally covered and the tale had been told many times over, yet the public still yearned to hear about this spectacular Mycenaean victory. When the original veterans faded into the grave, the tale anywhere it was told needed a bit of elaboration to make it interesting.

Delmont Hamilton: So in other words this is where the Trojan Horse came into the Picture.

Anestasia: Yeah, I mean, are we all really supposed to believe the Trojans were so dumb as to not anticipate a trap when they saw this huge gift from their blood enemies standing outside their front gate?

Delmont Hamilton: It's a nice alliteration. It's a great story to read, for sure. Homer must have been a great poet who mainly entertained the well educated elitist elements of his society. Since most were literate, he decided to make a double mint by copying down his account of this story. So, therefore, here it is for all of us to enjoy.

Anestasia: That is about how our account went from the time.

Delmont Hamilton: Well, it's around midnight already. Why is it that the fire is built on the cliff face outside this temple?

Anastasia: On the hill behind the temple complex here stands an altar dedicated to the glory of Astraea, who vowed one day to return to earth during an age of future world wide chaos. We've had that already and all is still chaotic. We anticipate her return is imminent. The night skies are often pink. Her massive flying trumpet appears in the heavens. The entire city hears voices from her angelic company inside the rolling rumble of midnight thunder. The altar is the city's beacon for her glorious return. The acolytes bear the duty of cutting and stacking the fire wood. My duty as chief priestess is to light and maintain the cherished altar flame.

Delmont Hamilton: This temple is beautiful. I simply cannot believe I've found this place. I can't believe I have met with you. Nobody else will believe this tale back home either. Time is a-flying and I must make it home soon.

Anastasia: This city is positioned inside a cup shaped valley in such a way that it is veiled from sight by land. From the air a special blanket of sapphire Crystalline mist conceals us from above and from the eye of radar. The surrounding world knows not of our existence. So now, tell me in earnest Delmont, when shall I expect your return?

Delmont Hamilton. On the third night from now, if it's not raining.

Anastasia: Where is your boat anchored? I'll escort you out.

Delmont Hamilton: I didn't come in a boat. I swam across the river.

Anastasia: Why did you not use a boat? Swimming is doing it the hard way.

Delmont Hamilton: My town has imposed a sentence of death on any who dare to leave. Everything we need to survive and thrive is right there, so why go off only to court negative mindsets and ideas? If I bank a canoe or anchor a boat along the shore, somebody will find it and turn me in. Should I leave here in a boat, somebody somewhere will spot it. There are no second chances. Its death by stoning, and the entire town carries out the sentence.

Anastasia: Such a brutal way to live and die, poor soul.

Delmont Hamilton: Surely I hate to leave, but I must go away now.

Anastasia: I'll be certain to light the flame by 2100 three nights from now, to guide you in.

Delmont Hamilton: I shall surely return to such a beautiful town and such beautiful People.

Stage lights gradually dim out. Anastasia and Delmont Hamilton exit

Scene 3

0800

*In Meadowshire
At the house on Porter's Corner*

Enter Delmont Hamilton and grandPa

grandPa: So how's the liquor run coming along?

Delmont Hamilton: The run appears to be flowing marvelously. Today it should be completed.

grandPa: What's this about you being gone boy? We've got work to do.

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah, I've ventured out from time to time.

grandPa: Where ya been boy? A seein' some woman?

Delmont Hamilton: Sort of. I suppose you could say I was seein' a woman.

grandPa: Where is she from? Who's her parents and her next of kin?

Delmont Hamilton: You wouldn't believe this place if I told you, grandPa. You simply wouldn't believe it!

grandPa: Did you leave Meadowshire here boy?

Delmont Hamilton: Well, yeah to be honest.

grandPa: How dare you boy! You know there is nothin' but degeneration, devilry and witchcraft out there in this dark earth. We've tole you that all yer life Son.

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah, I know, but I read a lot. Everywhere is not bad grandPa. Some places are, but not everywhere.

grandPa: Yeah, well you keep on believin' Satan's lies. I'm 'll tell ya once here 'N now boy, he's gonna git ya kilt.

Delmont Hamilton: But granPa, you'd have to see this place. There can't be another like it anywhere!

grandPa: Where is it, boy? Is it where I'm bettin' your gonna tell me it is? Ya know, its death if ya git caught a-venturin' out.

Delmont Hamilton: You ever heard of a place called Highland Haven? Its way across the big spread.

grandPa: Yeah I've heard of it! It's a demon's lair boy. It's a witch's magic trick. You only thought it was a real place.

Delmont Hamilton: No grandPa, this place is real, just as real as where we are standin' right now!

grandPa: You met a woman there, didn't ya boy?

Delmont Hamilton: Yeah grandPa, I did meet a woman there, and she was ever bit as real as you or me.

grandPa: It's a demon, boy! It's probably what they call a succubus.

Delmont Hamilton: No grandPa, she's a real woman, all the way to the bone.

grandPa: Well boy, you jest keep on in that place, in that woman 'll be the death of you. Look at me when I'm a-talkin' to ya.. (*nods*) Now I tole ya so!

Delmont Hamiton: Unless love kin be deadly, I don't see how.

grandPa: Well boy, we don't have no time fer foolishness round here. We got liquor to run and money to make. We don't have no time fer any TomFoolery about strange places and the devil's women.

grandPa turns away and exits

Delmont Hamilton: (*steps around in the back of the house toward the chicken pen*)

Enter Jimbo

Walks up from the wooded lot behind

Jimbo: I heard you've been havin' adventures, Delmont.

Delmont Hamilton: Where did ya hear a thing like that from?

Jimbo: GrandPa just now in passin'. Son he huffed on past me like a whirlwind. He was so mad he was puffin' smoke like a freight train.

Delmont Hamilton: He wasn't lyin'. I had some real adventures. It was in a place called Highland Haven.

Jimbo: Other people have seen that same mirage, Delmont. GrandPa is right. I don't know about the demons and witches part of that tale, but you ain't the only one.

Delmont Hamilton: Naw, it's a real place with real people in it. I walked down some real streets, and entered inside a real beautiful temple like no place I had ever been inside of.

Jimbo: You know the town council here in Meadowshire 'll have you stoned to death for doing that, if they were to find out.

Delmont Hamilton: That's why I have to venture out of this place. I can stand being stifled by ignorance.

Jimbo: I don't know. How do you know any of what you experienced is real? I have heard about the mirage. That particular mirage is highly deceptive. How did you make it across?

Delmont Hamilton: I swam. I didn't take a canoe or jon boat because I was afeared it might be spotted and the authorities alerted to somebody traveling outside limits. All they would have had to do is hide and pounce when I came out.

Jimbo: So tell me Delmont, did ya meet a woman? I already know ya did. I want to hear about this.

Delmont Hamilton: Man, you wouldn't believe this place. There was this big marble temple with twenty seven polished perfectly white marble columns sixty feet tall. Well, there is this chief priestess inside. She lights an altar by the cliff face to the goddess Astrea.

Jimbo: What's her name, man? You still haven't told me that.

Delmont Hamilton: Her name 's Anastasia.

Jimbo: When you swim that deep and really wide section of the river, how do you know where to make landfall?

Delmont Hamilton: I can see the flame from here when she lights the altar. I swim toward that flame.

Jimbo: Is it much trouble making it across?

Delmont Hamilton: Only a steady breast stroke for an hour and a half, that's all.

Jimbo: I bet that woman is beautiful. What color is her hair?

Delmont Hamilton: A reddish blond, and she's full bodied in all the right places too, let me tell ya!

Jimbo: If she makes you go to all that trouble for her, she absolutely must be.

Delmont Hamilton: She is one hundred percent real, all the way down to the bone, Buck!

Jimbo: When ya goin' back?

Delmont Hamilton: Night after tomorrow.

Jimbo: I'm coming out with you. I want to spy this altar flame you tell me of.

Delmont Hamilton: Alright, come on out with me. We'll walk out at about eight or so. I want to be swimming by nine.

Two nights later at eight fifteen

Jimbo: So you take this little foot path through the woods out to the river, eh?

Delmont Hamilton: Been taking it out there for years. I've only recently made it across the deep and wide here.

Jimbo: Well I declare we've been walking now for twenty minutes but it doesn't seem like it.

Delmont Hamilton: See the river up ahead in the moonlight? Look.

Jimbo: Yeah I see it. We're easing up close to the river bank now, but I don't see any altar flame on the cliff-face there across the river.

Delmont Hamilton: You don't see it? There it is, *(points)* clear as a bell!

Jimbo: I swear man, I don't see a thing! You're shuckin' me, man! How dare you?

Delmont Hamilton: You don't see that, man? Damn! You must be blind as a bat.

Jimbo: All I kin say is that you need to be careful making that swim. I mean real careful Delmont. *(gazes out across the water)* I declare I still don't see anything, Delmont. Are you sure you're alright? Have you been into ole Jethro Dimple's hideaway stash? He makes some bad stuff. You know that.

Delmont Hamilton: *(pulls out his water proof wind up pocket watch)* It's nearing nine. I've gotta go *(begins taking off shirt and stripping down to a pair of cutoff jeans)*.

Jimbo: You be careful Delmont. I wanna see ya come back home.

Delmont Hamilton: *(eases down into the river)* I will, and I am gonna come back, just you wait and see.

Jimbo: *(shaking his head from side to side)* I swear man, a piece of snoot ain't worth all of this mess. You gotta be outta yer cotton pickin' mind! I can find mine a darn sight easier over at The Red Lantern.

Stage lights dim out. Delmont Hamilton and Jimbo exit

Scene 4

On the river bank by the cliff face near Highland Haven

Delmont Hamilton swims the deep and wide part of the river, moving toward the flame on the cliff face nearly a mile away. The wind is smooth, seemingly assisting him in his swim. He makes it to the river bank nearly exhausted. He rolls over on the river bank face down. He hears a movement behind him. He rolls over upon his back. His eyes are blinded by a full moon. A dark hooded figure suddenly stands over him.

Enter Anastasia

Anastasia: When I lit the altar flame I knew you were on your way. The waves appeared rather choppy, with much foam. I'm concerned about the huge catfish, mako shark, ten foot long water moccasins, and more that can be found out there at night. I was watching and waiting.

Delmont Hamilton: Everybody thinks you're not real back home. They claim this whole city here is a false mirage. Grandpa warned me, cousin Jimbo warned me. My neighbor, Huckle Buck, warned me. All of these people told me the same tale. But lady, this place and you are real as this river, the moon, and the bank here, or I'm crazy as a croakin' coot!

Anastasia: No sane man would dare swim deep and wide here, Delmont. So you tell me what to think about it. As for me and this city in the valley being real, are long fabled realms cloaked in misty veils real? Does a huge cave on a mountainside with the rainbow waterfalls covering its entrance and the mysterious stone town inside, bear a place in reality? Are there elegant grand kingdoms in the mysterious star lit beyond awaiting discovery? Are angels, spirits, and demons real? Can the breath of Dragons blow frosty mist? Can those among the living truly know about the realm of the dead? Answer these questions to find your sought after secret to behold.

Delmont Hamilton: Angels are real only if angels wear robes of purple and golden trim. Towns inside caves and grand kingdoms in the beyond await our discovery. Spirits and demons may be felt when

consumed in elegant hand held goblets, or standing all around
Us and properly summonsed. The dead whisper their secrets
into our ears and minds on the chime of the witching hour,
especially on a full moon. So how is my answer to your
proposed question?

Anastasia: *(holds out hand)* Stand up.

Delmont Hamilton: *(takes her hand, pulls up to his feet)* It does feel better once
I'm up and standing.

Anastasia: *(reaches into her robe, takes out flask and small glass, pours it full)*
Take this and your strength shall be fully restored.

Delmont Hamilton: *(takes glass, tosses it back)* Gross woman, what kind of liquor
is this! *(gags)*

Anastasia: That's no liquor, but you will feel so much better soon. Follow me.
(begins walking) This path was cut by the great unsung viceroy from the
battle of Troy, Teucer. When the Mycenae filled their ships with Trojan
treasure, many sailed far and wide to trade it for gold, or more gold
than the gold already in it was worth. One of the places they arrived at
was here, with the wealth they made. They purchased land and supplies
from the natives. The natives didn't care for gold, but they loved strong
wine and pearls. On the summit of the hill here we cannot view the city
because of the crystalline mist lingering inside the valley.
Instrumentation is also rendered useless here. We are not on any maps,
so claims made of a city and its inhabitants truly seem unreal.

Delmont Hamilton: Well what makes ladies donning elegant purple hooded robes
seem so unreal?

Anastasia: The same force that makes flower tongued swimmers seem so unreal.
We are entering the main section of the city before the temple. See how
it sparkles in the moonlight?

Delmont Hamilton: Those are the mica bits found inside the polish you clean the marble on the outside with. They will hold for maybe a year, but then you must recoat everything again. In the daytime they are invisible.

Anastasia: Very observant, and the answer is exact. The particular type of mica we use is only found in Pontevedra, Spain. None anywhere else is like it.

Delmont Hamilton: That is truly amazing. All of what you are showing me none will ever believe back home.

Anastasia: Are you certain what your eyes behold is real? What we see can be extremely deceiving, Delmont. Honestly, reality is never as it seems. We are all caged spirits in a body of flesh, inside a world of illusion and danger. Nothing ever is as it seems. A splendid memory is only a fleeting moment captured, but is it real or only a mirage of something glorious that once was, yet now is no more? Shall the invasive sub creatures from the dismal underworld below, slime their way inside and purloin our glorious perfection for all infinity?

Delmont Hamilton: Memories are reflections of a reality that once was. But is that reality now only a fading dream? Might this city only be a reflection stuck in time, yet captured here for all eternity?

Anastasia: Your neighbors and family more than likely had business people, traders, hunters, trappers, pass by here down through the years. They were ruled by their inner fears and never dared to step inside these crystalline clouds. Had they dared to do so, they would have been mesmerized by the dazzling beauty in what they beheld.

Delmont Hamilton: My family and neighbors are business people and traders now. We have an operation running shine. Many have moved all around this valley here. I can't imagine why they were a-feared to take a chance.

Anastasia: This of course, is the temple where I am priestess. We both were here the other day.

Delmont Hamilton: What are all of those people doing gathered up on the steps as they are?

Anastasia: These situations are called *debates*. The debates run as such. We all live according to some philosophical perspective. For the past century our philosophy in general has been that of *realism*. In other words, what one beholds before him is whatever it is. These can be things, situations, or circumstances. There is nothing to be inferred about it. As it stands, is whatever it is. Our dominant philosopher is a man called Xan. See how the men have formed a circle? Xan stands in the center. He is arguing in favor of the philosophical doctrine of realism.

See the man standing inside the circle but closer to the edge? This man is a direct challenger to the philosophical doctrine. His name is Lucas. He has found holes in the doctrine. He is saying that the sun is fixed in one place, for example, yet since the earth turns the sun appears to rise and fall. So therefore we must question reality. Nothing is as it stands.

Delmont Hamilton: So these situations are like intellectual duels. I like that, but what is the point?

Anastasia: Well, for one this is our primary form of entertainment. The argumentative point is to use the opposition's line of philosophical support for his conclusion, to support your opposing conclusion. One could say this is the ideal.

Delmont Hamilton: What do these people get out of this? Are they simply having Fun?

Anastasia: The chief philosophers in these debates own their academies, where they teach their philosophies. Many are wealthy. These academy

owners are challenged by opposing philosophers who wish for their Own doctrine to dominate. Also, wealthy business people and government leaders stand around to watch. The dominant philosophers are selected to host their house parties. These philosophers gravitate toward the highest bidders. In short, there is money to be made and entire livelihoods to be lost in these classy displays, Delmont..

Delmont Hamilton: How does your religion intersect with this philosophy?

Anastasia: If everything actually in the world before us is real, then manifestations from God must be, and so is God.

Delmont Hamilton: How do we define a manifestation from God?

Anastasia: A manifestation from God begins with this sensation that the power of God is all around us. We sense it in the morning sun, the wind, the rustling of the leaves, the flight of birds, and especially swans. Good fortune is a manifestation of God. These are real when they occur, and when no valid opposing argument exist to explain their presence, then it must be by the hand of God.

Delmont Hamilton: Do you live inside that temple?

Anastasia: I have living quarters inside. My job is to keep the hearth fire burning and facilitate worship during festival events.

Delmont Hamilton: Everybody walks around here or rides horses and donkeys. I see an occasional wagon or chariot. I don't see any vehicles anywhere. This I find strange.

Anastasia: Vehicles? What do you mean? We have the wagons and chariots. What are they if not vehicles?

Delmont Hamilton: You mean you don't know? I mean, we still have people with horses and wagons, but an ever growing number want

automobiles and such.

Anastasia: Please Delmont, I don't understand. Automobiles, what are they? Tell me about them. What does one look like?

Delmont Hamilton: They are kind of like horse carriages without the horse. They carry people along without a horse. The people turn a wheel, which turns the wheels on the side of the vehicle, and that is how they move about.

Anastasia: A lyre and a chelyse band is playing inside here tonight. Let us go inside. Smell the food?

Delmont Hamilton: Smells like roast beef and bacon.

Anastasia: It's mutton with a hint of bacon, wrapped in grape leaves. See them cooking on the grill Delmont?

Delmont Hamilton: They are cooked on sticks, with the sticks stuck through. That is really neat! What are the big long rolls with the stuff inside of them?

Anastasia: Those are called *Gyros*. Greek people have been eating them for many long years. The grape leaf rolls with the stick through them are called *Souvlaki*.

Delmont Hamilton: How much are those gyros?

Anastasia: Half a doubloon.

Delmont Hamilton: I have a fifty cent silver piece here. (*hands it over*)

Anastasia: (*looks it over, hands it to the cook*) This will be very appetizing.

Delmont Hamilton: It's all for you. I don't want anything right now. I can't help but

notice these stoves. They are like hollowed out stones filled with charcoal, and a grill top is placed over it.

Anastasia: Works pretty neatly, doesn't it Delmont?

Delmont Hamilton: I can't get over how all of these buildings, inside and out, sparkle in this night-flame and the moonlight.

Band begins playing

Anastasia: I know this song. It's called The Night We Forgot About the Moon.

Delmont Hamilton: It's a truly beautiful song.

Anastasia: Come, dance with me, Delmont!

Delmont Hamilton: Sure, I know the Virginia Reel. (*grabs her waist with right hand, her left hand with his right*)

Anastasia: Naw, it's like this! (*circles and high steps*) This dance is called *The Cordax*. It was here from the very beginning.

Delmont Hamilton: This is fun. I really like this dance. I like the way all the people interact so much.

Anastasia: That is what really encourages family and togetherness. We are huge believers in this.

Delmont Hamilton: It's tough for me to believe we are still in America. There is no other place in America like this.

Anastasia: Are we in America? Where is America? Tell me about this place.

Delmont Hamilton: Well now, I'm only from right across the river there. That is not all that far away.

Anastasia: Are you sure that is where you are from?

Delmont Hamilton: Sure, I'm sure!

Anastasia: Are you sure that you know where you have entered?

Delmont Hamilton: Certainly, it's Highland Haven!

Anastasia: How can you be sure? When you make that swim next time, how can you be sure you'll wind up in the same place?

Delmont Hamilton: Well, because you'll alight that altar flame.

Anastasia: What guarantees it shall hold its burn?

Delmont Hamilton: It will because I trust you.

Anastasia: You are wise to place your trust in me. I am loyal until the bitter end.

Band stops playing

Delmont Hamilton: They are putting their instruments away, so it seems.

Anastasia: Yes, it's getting late. Look outside, the moon has moved out.

Delmont Hamilton: That is a sign it's about 0230. It's time for me to swim back Out.

Anastasia: How do you know where to make landfall on your return?

Delmont Hamilton: I know the area that well.

Anastasia: I'll walk you back out to the deep and wide.

Down by the river bank. Delmont removes his shirt and takes off his trousers, revealing his shorts underneath.

Delmont Hamilton: (*Hugs Anastasia*) It breaks my heart so, but I suppose I must Go.

Anastasia: You must go, Delmont. When shall I expect your return?

Delmont Hamilton: In three nights from now, if it doesn't rain. I will get into the water at exactly eight o'clock.

Anastasia: I'll light the altar flame for you.

Delmont Hamilton: Until then.. Until the time is right. (*He eases down into the river and begins his swim*)

Delmont Hamilton and Anastasia exit

Scene 6

Back at the house in Porter's Corner

Enter Bo Hump, Pap, and Delmont Hamilton

Bo Hump: I saw you come in might neigh four in the mornin' Delmont. Ain't but one thang that kin keep a man up and out all night like that. For most men its liquor, but this house produces a free flow here. So there ain't but one more thang Delmont.. A crab wants his shell to crawl up into, come night time.

Pap: Son, we got work to do 'round here. We've been a-rollin' in the money. We got more orders for treble run than we kin fill! We gotta do what it takes

now. Me and your gradPa, an' the others are gonna hold it all under wraps for another day and a night, but then it's your turn again. Same with the runs. Once the batches have all been cooked up, we'll all take turns a-haulin' it Out.

Delmont Hamilton: Sounds like ever-thing has been a-stir while I was away.

Bo Hump: Yeah, much so, but tell us about your stir.

Delmont Hamilton: Nobody will believe me if I was to tell it.

Pap: Now son, I already know that you've been a trapsin' over yonder round that devil city. I know you think you are seein' a woman, but I'm here to tell ya it's a demon! That whole place is a mirage of the past, boy. What you saw won't real. The streets won't real, boy. You've been deceived by witchery and the power of Satan. Don't you listen to what the preacher says on these Sunday mornin's where we've gone ever since you've been alive?

Delmont Hamilton: If this place is not real, then I am sure fooled. You are right. Yeah, I've been talkin' to a woman. Let me tell ya, she has a body that 'll stop a freight train dead in its tracks.

Pap: What does this woman do with herself in the daytime?

Delmont Hamilton: She's the chief priestess in a great big temple that glitters in the moonlight.

Pap: Chief priestess? To what god, boy?

Delmont Hamilton: Astrea, I think it was what I heard her say.

Pap: Astrea? What kind O' god is that, boy?

Delmont Hamilton: Some kind of Greek goddess, is all that I know.

Pap: Its devils boy! That's what it is. I'm a-tellin' ya boy, stay away from that place. You know and I know the only holy place to live in is Meadowshire, the new Jerusalem, if one there ever was!

Delmont Hamilton: This is an intelligent woman. I'm telling all of ya. You wouldn't believe what your eyes are seeing if I carried you to this place.

Bo Hump: You know it's against the law. The penalty is death if you are caught. You know that. We can't swim, and you can't take a boat, so we'll never be able to come with ya. It's li'le ole you all alone.

Pap: I'll tell ya this much. The penalty will be death anyway. You are being lured into a demon's heart boy. That woman 'll lead you into some messed up places and will have ya doin' messed up things. The penalty for sin is death! Consortin' with demons is a sin, boy.

Delmont Hamilton: Now listen and tell me the truth. Does a crow not wish to fly unfettered? Does a stag not wish to run free, and unhampered? Does not the rain wish to freely fall without being held up in a cloud? Does not the sun wish to shine without any hindrance upon its rays? Well likewise, so do I.

Bo Hump: I understand, but we're all a-trying to tell ya something, Delmont. That woman could be the death of ya in that place, and we all don't want to see it happen.

Delmont Hamilton: Have you ever heard of anybody who ventured over there?

Bo Hump: Yeah, I've heard tales exactly like the ones you are telling. Most of These people simply never returned home.

Pap: Swallowed up by them demons boy! That's what happened to 'em. I don't lie!

Bo Hump: These few people I once knew talked about feasts of milk and honey,

walkin' on streets of gold, no pain, no sickness, and no gettin' old.
After a few times out I never saw any of 'em again, ever!

Pap: Lies are nothin' to base life on, son. The bigger the lie the more they are Believed. That woman 'll draw ya in, then you'll be trapped into a demon's lair for all eternity.

Delmont Hamilton: But she and this place is every bit as real as we are sitting here, talking like this. This place, Highlanders Haven, is a living, breathing, town or city. It's hazy and covered in rolling fog. I'll admit, I only see a building ahead of myself. I get a strange feeling that what I am seeing are ghosts, captured in the present from a long since faded past. This woman, Anastasia, I walk with her hither and thither there. I talk with her. This place is beyond description. It fits perfectly into every storybook fantasy I've ever had. How could such a beautiful scene only be a false mirage?

Bo Hump: I've never been there, personally, Delmont. I've known very few who have. All of their tales sound exactly like yourn. Then they simply vanished. They all swam across the deep and wide exactly like you are, since it's illegal to go there and punishable by death. We all figured the gators or them monster catfish out there got 'em or they drowned.

Delmont Hamilton: I've finally at long last found a place exactly like the one I've always dreamed of. I'm tired of feeling like I'm so repressed. I like running shine but Drummond Company, who lord's over this place where we live, acts like they're running a prison. We can't leave. We can't own our property, but only lease it from these pigs. We have no choice but to use their money, which is thirty percent more than national currency. We can't own guns in the property, since they own the property and often inspect it, searchin' for these items. They want us to eat this fake meat they design, and forbid us to eat the real thing. Running shine isn't allowed either, but they look the other way because they

can demand a huge payoff from us, if we are caught. Up in the hill caves we keep guns, bibles, salted meat, and many other items they don't want us to own here. But this is America, and why do we have live underneath some government and corporation's boot heel? In Highland Haven, people seem to live relaxed and do as they please. I can't stop going there now. My situation will have to run its course.

Pap: Well we told you so boy. This life we live here is all that we've ever known. If you don't want to listen, then it will be our heart ache, not yours, when you fail to return home.

Two nights later all three walk back down to the river bank by the deep and wide.

Bo Hump: What are ya standing here staring out across that water for Delmont?

Delmont Hamilton: Searching for the altar fire up on the white cliff face yonder.

Pap: See anything yet, cause we sure don't?

Delmont Hamilton: Its time..., and there it is! (*pointing*) See the column of flame yonder ahead? Look! Across the water there on the rise of the cliff edge afar.

Bo Hump: I swear I don't see a thing. Are you alright, Delmont?

Pap: We don't see it boy. I don't, Bo Hump don't... I don't think ten people could see what you are seeing. But are you really seeing anything boy? That's the part really a-botherin' me.

Bo Hump: You didn't get hold of Aunt Jessie's rhododendron honey mead did you? If you drink that you'll see spider webs everywhere, flying pink elephants, thousands of ants on the wall, and all kinds of stuff.

Delmont Hamilton: Naw, I haven't been into anything. (*pulls his shirt off, strips*

down to his cut off jeans, eases down into the water) I've got places to go. I see my sign clearly as a bell ahead. I've got people to see and business to take care of.

Pap: Fare thee well, boy, fare thee very well. That's all I have left to say about it.

Stage lights gradually dim out. Pap, Bo Hump, Delmont Hamilton exit, curtains fall.

Act 3

Scene 1

Some four months later back in Highland Haven

Enter Delmont Hamilton and Anastasia

Underneath a weeping willow by a garden pond, sitting in garden chairs beside a statue of Pallas and Athena upon marble pedestals.

Anastasia: It seems like I've known you for life, my love. We walk down the streets, into the cafes, into the many bistros, dance in the dance halls, we sing songs of passion and tranquility down by the river, we love in the Beautiful allspice bushes beside the gentle waterfall in the cool evenings. I truly feel as though we both are of one soul.

Delmont Hamilton: The swim across the deep and wide seems second nature at present now. I actually finished the hour swim in less than an hour. Maybe the kind winds carry me along now when they didn't before.

Anastasia: Give thanks to Nyx, queen of the night zephyr, who blesses our loving union. She thrives in the moonlight, she flies in the gentle breeze, the

Dew born from her tears of joy greets us all in the morning.

Delmont Hamilton: I sense an unseen presence by the pond before us here, a hint of spirituality surrounding us both.

Anastasia: Many unseen powers thrive all around us, Delmont, including Burman, the old man in a hooded linen robe, the messenger of impending doom.

Delmont Hamilton: What is the event he is forecasting? Why is he nearby as we sit among ourselves?

Anastasia: He makes no forecast at the present moment. He is sent forth by the raven, to frequent our presence by the pond. He knows I am a high priestess in the temple for the goddess Astrea. He honors and fears Astrea.

Delmont Hamilton: Surely he has something to say, yet I see him not.

Anastasia: Nothing I am yet aware of. What about you? I only feel his presence. He has not made his visual presence known to me.

Enter Burman, the old man in a gray linen hooded robe

Delmont Hamilton: Do you see the old man standing before the water in front of us, Anna?

Anastasia: It's your vision, not mine. Yet I sense his powerful, unsettling presence. Does he speak?

Delmont Hamilton: Not yet. He stands there motionless, staring forward in our direction as we sit amusing ourselves.

Anastasia: He reveals himself visually for a reason.

Delmont Hamilton: He says nothing. The water in the pond commences clouding.

Anastasia: Remain attentive. All to me appears as it usually does. I see nothing of your mentioning.

Delmont Hamilton: I see choppy water. I feel a strong wind. There is sudden darkness. A man swims erratically, without direction. I now see a sunny day on a sandy bank of some type. I behold a dirt mound 'neath a stone of rose quartz and another of rhodolite garnet, surrounded by nine rubies. The old man only stands, gazing forward toward us, saying nothing of anything toward me. You do not bear witness to any of this?

Anastasia: The vision is not mine, so therefore I bear no inspired gift for Interpretation.

Delmont Hamilton: When we drank ambrosia, were there any herbs in it?

Anastasia: Nothing in it caused the vision you just had.

Delmont Hamilton: I have no idea what this vision means. (*reaches over, seizes Anastasia's right hand*) I do know that I truly adore you with all of my heart.

Anastasia: Is the old man still standing there?

Delmont Hamilton: He is slowly fading now.

Burman exits

Anastasia: My love for you will not allow me to sit idle, without making some valid points. Is everything as you are convinced it is? What if everything truly is a mirage? What if our surroundings are only real in the moment, only to become ever fading dreams later on? This space before us may be an elegant pond, with a garden behind us here, but what was this space a hundred years earlier? Was it only a barren tract of forest? What

type of people walked upon its leafy floors? What was it like a thousand years before that? Five thousand years before? What about us ourselves? Are we real beings of flesh, or only spirits clothed in flesh? Do we fade away, never to return again, or simply shed our flesh and blood clothing? Are your eyes revealing truth to your mind? These are questions demanding hard consideration, Delmont.

Delmont Hamilton: There is only one question concerning me out of all. Does your love burn in a never ending flame for me, as mine does for you? I have no other question or concern pressing on me. Allow time to deliver my fate, yet I feel it shall indeed be a splendid one.

Anastasia: Surely my love is unyielding. Time shall see us through eternity from today forward.

Stage lights dim out. Delmont Hamilton, Anastasia exit

Scene 2

Back at Porter's Point in Meadowshire

Enter Pap, GrandPa, Bo Hump, Delmont Hamilton

Seated in the living room by the hearthside

Pap: All of this work around here, and you're out a-Tom cattin' round in the devil's den somewhere, and with a living succubus at that.

Delmont Hamilton: She's surely an angel, if one there ever was Pap.

Pap: You keep thinkin' so, boy. Many a good man said the same, only to turn face up in some forgotten corner. I don't know how many times we have to tell ya

that. You ain't the first to go a-trapesin' off and think he's found heaven somewhere way out among devils!

grandPa: Yer Pap is right. That place you speak such blossomin' tales of, I've heard tale of it. There's a problem with it boy. The problem is that it ain't real. Nobody anywhere knows why or how that vision appears. It only appears to certain people, boy, and evidently you're one of 'em.

Bo Hump: Neither myself or any one of us could see that altar fire out yonder on the cliff face in the dark of night that you told us about. You swam out to it and claimed you had adventures over there. This can't last forever, Delmont.

Pap: If nothin's else, these authorities around here will find out, and be layin' out waitin' fer ya, boy. I know some people and I might be able to buy ya off, but don't you or anybody else dare bet your life on it. These people here are unpredictable, I tell ya. Yer end could come about in a snap.

Delmont Hamilton: Does a wild bird suddenly placed into a cage, simply not quit eating and die? Have wild horses cornered high up on a cliff edge, not been known to turn and leap over when no other option for liberty exist? Have tall buildings aflame not seen dozens of people leap from the highest windows? During the battle of Masada, did not the Zealot revolutionaries draw lots and slay their comrades in arms, until only one of their own was left standing, rather than submit to Roman enslavement? Then so do I choose freedom of the wind over bondage on any given day or night, even if the price I pay for doing so is my Life.

Pap: Well boy, I tole ya now. I got loads of hard corn we're gatherin' out in the fields here and putin in the corn bin. Customers 'll be comin' in soon. Hogs 'll need fattenin', hams 'll soon need curin, last year's hams need sellin', roadside crafts need makin. 'N ya know what else, boy? Fall is near at hand. Winds 'll pick up, not to mention that water a-coolin. There won't be much in

the way of you swimmin' for a while soon. We've laid back enough liquor for our use and some to sell. We'll be back to doin' that all too soon around here.

GrandPa: We understand this need fer satisfyin' the urge to Tom-cat, but play time has to end. Besides that, a daughter of Satan simply ain't no good fer Anybody.

Delmont Hamilton: I don't mind helping out. A few more times out and I probably won't be able to go again until late spring when the water warms. I don't know if I can stand to be without my dear angel. I so dearly miss the walks out in that elegant park.

Already I miss those garden chats. I long for her company outside in the dark, so far away from such gloomy poverty and so many stray barnyard cats. I miss being inside that grand temple to Athena, so artfully constructed with such elegance and Sophistication. Only standing inside that place causes one to want to leap high as he is overcome with great elevation. But most of all I only long to be with her, the person, the flower, this enchanting lady. The one I'm so in love with, who vows to forever remain with me, and I don't mean maybe.

grandPa: Well, all of us have said all that can be. You've already cut your own trail and made yer own bed.

GrandPa, Pap, exit

Three nights later on the bank of the deep and wide

Delmont Hamilton: I know this tune by heart now. Sure enough, I spy the altar flame afar.

Bo Hump: Such a glorious sight nobody but you may discern.

Delmont Hamilton: Look! (*points across the water*) You can't see that? Look, it

burns with a column of flame reaching fairly high into the night sky.

Bo Hump: I can make out the cliff face in the moonlight. I don't see any altar flame, and neither has anybody else in all of these months.

Delmont Hamilton: It's because nobody really wants to see it. That is why they don't. *(pulls shirt and pants off, exposing swimming trunks, begins easing down into the water)*

Bo Hump: That is exactly what has all of us so afraid. You want to see this thing so much that you are seeing exactly what you want to see. Fare thee well. May the angel of judgment spare you a terrible price, Delmont.

Stage lights gradually dim, Bo Hump and Delmont Hamilton exit

Scene 3

While Delmont Hamilton swims toward the altar flame, the night wind increases dramatically. When he is halfway out, the altar flame on the cliff face before him suddenly vanishes. Three river boatmen and a local pause to walk along the sandy bank in the early morning.

Enter the three river boatmen and the local resident

Riverboatman #1: I declare, earlier this morning I saw it, right there..! *(points toward the altar)* It was just like she flew through the air into the Water, way down below yonder. It's hard to believe! Why such a thing? So young, with a full life still yet ahead. The shame, the unanswerable questions, oh the outright pity in it. I raced over there, but saw nothing in the water, like it had somehow swallowed her completely up.

Riverboatman #2: I wonder why such a thing occurred? Look! *(points toward the*

river) Something is afloat in the water ahead. What could it be ?
It isn't logs. It isn't river refuse. Why, it aint no canoe or boat, to
be shore!

Riverboatman #3: Looks like two floating corpses embracing, if one should ask
me.

Riverboatman #1: It's a man and a woman. (*turns toward the local man*) Do you
know 'em?

Local man: No, but I saw them around. The man had been swimming in the river
yonder. He came from across the water. You know it's illegal for people
to intermix from different towns and provinces. He had been coming
around for many long months in the dark of night. Such was the talk of
the town.

Riverboatman #2: Who is the woman?

Local man: The woman is an artist, a real trick-zie some have said. She fantasizes
that she was the priestess to some type of goddess from way back
when. There is an old abandoned classical styled warehouse in town
she told everybody was an ancient temple to this goddess. She longed
to break free of this place, she often told everybody from time to time.
She appeared to be at least a half bubble off plumb. Reality for her,
seemed tough to accept. People laughed at her homemade patched over
purple robe she always wore. Dope 'll do that kind of thang to a
person, I tell ya. She dabbled with Jimson weed, I always thought.

Riverboatman #1: So what happened here, you think?

Local man: There is a rock pile way up on the edge of the cliff face up high there.
Nobody knows exactly why it was there. She would go sit up beside
that rock pile at night and gaze out across the water in a trance-like
state. Every now and again she would light a fire on that rock pile, so
many have told me. She had some mighty big indepth fantasies, as I

have already said.

Riverboatman #1: So what happened with the man, you think?

Local man: Well, she must have been on the lookout fer her man, I figger. When he didn't show up, she waited all night. When the morning waves brought his corpse into bank here, she knew he had died on his swim to visit with her. So she threw herself off the cliff face into the water below, seeking to join him in death. They must have been alive enough when in the water together, for them to embrace as they have.

Riverbaotman #3: Let us bury 'em in a lover's tomb here on the bank as a memorial for all time forward. It's the least anybody could ever Do. It's such a pleasant story for people to ponder.

Riverboatman #1: There is a big red glassy looking stone right there up against the cliff. Another pink color of metallic stone sits nearby, and then pieces of stone that almost look like rubies. Let's gather all of This castaway stuff up.

Local man: I'll step back over to the house and fetch a shovel. I'll dig the hole at the base of where you said she jumped from the place on top of the cliff face.

Riverboatman #1: We'll wrap 'em both up in some old canvas I have. We can leave 'em embracing like they are. Once we make their dirt mound we can place the two bigger stones in the center, with the nine ruby-like stones surrounding it. For all time forward the world will know of this couple's sad love story.

Riverboatman #2: Tourists like to go down the river on the paddle-wheel boats sometimes nowadays. This would be a great place to stop and tell this disturbing, yet very real, dramatic story.

*Stage lights dim out, Riverboatman #1, Riverboatman #2, Riverboatman #3, Local,
Exit, curtains fall.*

THE END

